

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. - 16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim ~~[[16]] 24~~, wherein the developing solution contains an inorganic alkali agent.

18. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim ~~[[16]] 24~~, wherein the developing solution has a pH of 13.0 or less.

19. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim ~~[[16]] 24~~, wherein the developing solution contains a carbonic acid or a carbonate.

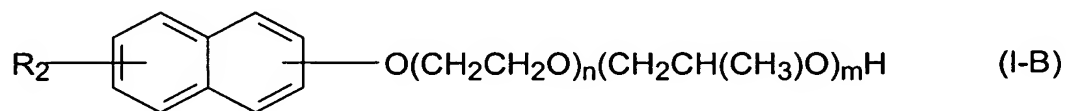
20. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim ~~[[16]] 24~~, wherein the developing solution contains a chelating agent ~~containing to~~ a divalent metal.

21. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim ~~[[16]] 24~~, wherein the developing solution has an electrical conductance of from 3 to 30 S/cm.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) The developing solution as claimed in claim  
[[16]] 24, wherein the developing solution contains a silicate.

24. (New) A developing solution comprising an alkali aqueous solution  
containing 2 to 10 wt% of at least one nonionic aromatic ether-based activator  
represented by the following formula (I-B):



wherein R<sub>2</sub> represents H or an alkyl group having from 1 to 100 carbon atoms, and n  
and m each represents an integer of from 0 to 100.